

DRAFT MEDIA RELEASE

GULF STATES BIO- AND AGRO-DEFENSE CONSORTIUM SAYS ITS NBAF BID IS NATION'S STRONGEST

BATELLE, IOWA STATE, TULANE JOIN MISSISSIPPI UNIVERSITIES TO FORGE RESEARCH 'DREAM TEAM'

Jackson, Mississippi (August 11, 2008) – The Gulf States Bio and Agro-Defense Consortium believes that Madison County, Mississippi is the ideal locale for the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) because of an unprecedented, collaborative effort among universities, advanced laboratory specialists, and members of the local community.

Madison County, Mississippi, is one of six finalists for the Department of Homeland Security's proposed NBAF and is best positioned to support the facility's mission because of its superior quality of life, readily available professional workforce and the strength of the educational partnership it has forged.

"The decision on where to locate NBAF is a complex, detailed merit-based process that has been ongoing for more than two years," said Gray Swoope, executive director of the Mississippi Development Authority. "We're convinced our effort is the strongest one: we have the workforce, the community support, a wonderful site and, critically, a research 'dream team' for NBAF."

Seven leading Mississippi universities are part of the Gulf States Consortium: Mississippi State University, the University of Mississippi, the University of Mississippi Medical Center, Alcorn State University, Jackson State University, Mississippi Valley State University and Tougaloo College. Combined, these institutions have 500 faculty members and produce more than 700 graduates annually in NBAF-related fields.

Iowa State and Tulane Universities – both recognized leaders in animal research and education – have committed to an exclusive partnership with the Consortium. Iowa State offers world-class animal and life sciences programs, works closely with the Agricultural Research Service, and provides a collaborative bridge to research at the National Animal Disease Center in Ames, Iowa. Tulane National Primate Research Center is world-renowned and conducts research in tropical and emerging diseases.

Also exclusive to the Gulf States Consortium is Battelle, the largest not-for-profit independent research and development laboratory in the world. Battelle manages eight major R&D laboratories, employs more than 21,000 worldwide, and has \$4 billion in annual revenue. For many years it has successfully managed several biosafety labs.

“Battelle chose to partner with the Gulf States Consortium from the beginning because we feel it is overwhelmingly the best choice to locate the NBAF,” said Dr. Jeffrey Wadsworth, Executive Vice President of Battelle’s Global Laboratory Operations. “This Consortium brings together a diverse set of research capabilities in animal and agro sciences and significant BSL-3 and BSL-4 experience. Equally important, community enthusiasm at both the state and local levels has been outstanding.”

The Department of Homeland Security is seeking the best location to build a \$451 million laboratory to research and develop countermeasures to diseases that infect humans, animals and both. The site selection process is ongoing with a decision expected to be announced this fall.

“It is no secret that Mississippi’s entire Congressional delegation supports this project,” Swoope said. “Mississippi ought not to be criticized for having one of the most unified, bipartisan and supportive Congressional delegations in the nation. Some are trying to use the media to damage Mississippi’s application. The fact is, Mississippi and our consortium partners represent the best proposal, and I am confident DHS will decide this on the merits.”

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NATIONAL BIO AND AGRO-DEFENSE FACILITY

MYTHS VS. FACTS

MYTH: The NBAF selection process has been based on politics.

FACT: The Department of Homeland security has employed a rigorous selection process.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and its federal partners identified the need for a safe, secure state-of-the-art agricultural and biological research facility designed to protect the nation's food supply and public health in January 2006. It then set in motion a detailed selection process that included reviewing applications from 29 interested sites from around the United States. Those sites were evaluated on four major criteria: proximity of research capabilities and workforce, construction of an environmentally suitable site and community acceptance. DHS then requested more information from 18 sites in 11 states for its phase-two evaluation. Sites were eliminated because of the lack of proximity to existing advanced Bio-Safety labs (BSL-3 and BSL-4 labs) and complimentary research programs. DHS also considered the availability of each site to recruit world-class researchers.

In July of 2007, five sites in five states advanced to the final phase in the competitive process.

MYTH: Mississippi is a weak contender.

FACT: The Gulf States Bio- and Agro-Defense Consortium is the strongest bidder for NBAF.

By individual measures and collectively, the Gulf States Consortium's bid for NBAF is the strongest among its competitors.

- The community of Madison County, Mississippi, has expressed unprecedented support for the facility.
- The Consortium has assembled a world-class team of educational and research partners – including leading Mississippi universities and world-class institutions from outside the state.
- The consortium also has extensive bio-containment experience – operating a dozen Bio-Safety Level 3 (BSL-3) laboratories and three Bio-Safety Level 4 (BSL-4) labs.
- Mississippi has more than 500 faculty members and produces more than 700 graduates annually in NBAF-related fields.
- The Madison County site represents the most cost effective alternative for the NBAF. In fact, over the course of 50 years, the Madison County site would save U.S. taxpayers an average of \$256 million compared with the competing sites in terms of construction, operation and maintenance.

- According to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement recently released by the DHS, the Madison County site ranked as well or better than any mainland site in terms of affects on the surrounding environment.